

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Story: Chapter 30 – Passing the Torch
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 29, 2012

As we sprint to the end of our year studying the Bible with the help of The Story we find ourselves lingering over the life of a very great Christian, Paul the Apostle. In a minute I am going to let you share with me some of your favorite verses that Paul wrote. A good way for you to look at his writing is to flip through the books in the middle of the New Testament. Paul wrote two kinds of letters, several to churches known by the name of the city that they were in and then several to people, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Share with me some of your favorite Pauline passages:

Some of mine include:

Romans 8:1, 37-39

1 Cor. 2: 2

2 Cor. 4:7-10, 5:17

Gal. 3:28, 6:7

Eph. 2:8-10

Phil. 2:5-11

Of all the authors in the history of the world Paul has impacted the world more than any other writer hands down. His letters to the church have brought down kingdoms, healed marriages, formed and reformed the Church and given hope to saints that sin for two thousand years. That is because the life and truths that he wrote about was Jesus Christ and the people he wrote to was the church, the hope of the world.

Where I want us to linger this morning is in the idea of passing the torch. Of living in such a way that the love and truth of Christ does not end with this generation. How are we to continue the heritage of hundreds of years of faith if we are not deliberate about it?

Paul's (not so) rare life of service

Remember he was first and foremost a scholar and teacher of the Jewish faith. Trained by the greatest teachers of his time, he meets Christ on the road to Damascus and as we saw last week his life was transformed. Everything changed. He led three missionary journeys that lasted years, helping to plant dozens of churches all across the world. He suffered terrible hardships; beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, betrayals, imprisonment. He was imprisoned at least twice, both by religious authorities and the government of Rome itself. All this while he paid his own way around the world by making tents and leather goods.

In our reading this week we read some of his last words. We read tender personal letters to his young protégés. Paul has lived his life in such a way so as to leave a heritage - not churches, not writings, but people. The task of the local church is not to preserve the truth, as in a museum but to live it and to teach it to the generation to come.

S. Truett Cathay, owner of Chick Filet said, "If you wish to enrich days, plant flowers; If you wish to enrich years, plant trees; If you wish to enrich Eternity, plant ideals in the lives of others."

Now from prison in Rome where he will soon be executed for his faith, Paul writes perhaps his most compelling letter, His last words. He is passing on his life hope to young Tim. Let's read a bit and see if we can extract from it a template for sharing and keeping the faith:

2 Timothy 2:1-9

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in

civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

What we are reading about here is endurance and perseverance, long suffering and patience. It is about standing in the gap when all others quit. It is about withstanding the criticism of enemies and even the accusations of friends feeling the heat of friendly fire and enemy fire. It is endurance. I know something of endurance. Not like Paul certainly, but in some ways, saints through the years have endured too. That is why I noted the not so rare life of Paul. The great in Christ are not necessarily famous, but they most certainly are enduring.

The Call for Endurance

2 Timothy 2:1

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus

Paul begins this section with the word "therefore." When you see the word "therefore" you want to look to see what it is there for. It refers back to the previous verses. In this case, it goes back to 2 Timothy 1:16-18 and the positive example of Onesiphorus. He was the man who had sought out Paul in the Roman prison to minister to him. Paul gave that example to Timothy for a reason. He says, "Because of the testimony of such a one, you also be strong in that same grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Grace wasn't something new to the life of Timothy. He had long been an associate of Paul and you could not associate with Paul without hearing about grace. This means that this call to grace is not a new call.

The command to "be strong" is in the present tense. When you give a command in the Greek present tense, it gives a focus upon continuing action.

We could translate this imperative as: *You therefore, my son, continue or keep on being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* This is a call to endurance. It is a call for Timothy to continue in that which he had already begun. We come to Christ by grace to be saved, trusting in Him and resting upon His merit. But grace doesn't stop at the cross. It only begins there. In the same way that we came by grace, so also now we are to continue in grace.

The Strategy for Endurance

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Paul has a method by which Timothy will be able to continue in grace and by which he will be able to impart that same grace to others. It is a strategic method. It involves the process of discipleship. Timothy is to take those teachings of grace that were given to him by Paul and he is to pass them on to others. But it is not to stop there. This is to be a multiplied ministry.

The Multiplying Church value - We must never become content. A good enough church most of the time. It is not done by programs; it is done by the church. You and I. We do this together.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

As Paul has taught Timothy, so Timothy is to multiply that ministry by teaching others who will pass those teachings on to even more. Do you have a Timothy? Is there someone in whose life you are passing on the grace of Christ? If you are a parent, then you have a ready-made Timothy. It is your child. Or your grandchildren. But even if you are not a parent, there are others whose lives you can be touching. I have seen Junior High students from this church invite friends over to study the Bible. I had a study at my home with three of my friends. Tim Gilbert and Eric Lewis later gave their lives to Christ in college. Years later Tim later contacted me and thanked me for introducing him to Christ, for making him thirsty to know more. I had no idea. We will get back to that idea in a moment.

Models of Endurance

The Example of a Soldier

Elizabeth Howard was a student at Wheaton College. She had scrutinized the boys on campus and decided that there was really only one who interested her at all: Jim Elliot. He displayed a maturity and godliness that was very attractive. When the school yearbooks were handed out, Elizabeth asked Jim to sign hers, hoping that if there was any interest in her, he might indicate so in signing her yearbook. When he returned it, she rushed to her room, found his signature and read beneath it these words:

2 Timothy 2:3-4

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

She later married this man, who would in turn be martyred by Indians of South America. He knew even as a young man his path would be life consuming and warned a young Elizabeth that if she was to love him, it meant a sacrificial life. I understand that the military life is hard, disciplined and rigorous. There are certain personages known as Drill Sergeants whose sole duty in life is to bring about hardship on the part of those under their command. There is marching and there is running and there is training and it begins before the sun comes up and it doesn't end even when the sun goes down.

The Christian is called to a similar life of discipline. He is called to suffer hardship the way a soldier suffers hardship. This is a call to dedicated service. Every Christian is already a soldier in God's army; it is just that some troops are loyal and some are not. Some are disciplined and some are not. All are called to service, some become entangled and some do not. Let's talk about that.

No soldier who is in active service *entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life*. He does not try to fight on the battlefield while at the same time trying to hold down a second job. The last thing a soldier on the battlefield needs is other areas of entanglement. He has only one function. It is to obey orders. When he is ordered to march, he marches. And when he is ordered to fight, he fights. The Christian is also called to free himself from entanglements. Instead of being so caught up in the details of everyday life, we are to seek to please our Lord. Is there something in your life that is drawing your attention away from the Lord? Give it to Him!

Remember last week's living example: Will you suffer hardship with me for the sake of the church? Will you sacrifice and share for the sake of the next generation of believers that will need this church? I promise you I will work hard and sacrifice. Luther sang "A Mighty Fortress" - *"The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still: His kingdom is forever."*

Suffer hardship with me – persevere with me in doing good and we will reap a harvest of divine proportions, even 100 fold - if we do not grow weary!

The Example of an Athlete

2 Timothy 2:5

And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

There are a lot of parallels that might be drawn between sports and the Christian life. Paul does this elsewhere, likening the Christian life to a race that must be run all the way to its conclusion. Or he speaks of the boxer who makes every punch count. Or he speaks of the athlete who competes to win a prize. In this verse Paul focuses upon a single parallel. It is a focus upon the rules. When you participate in sports, there are certain rules that must be followed. A runner in a race cannot choose his own course. A player in a game cannot make up his own rules.

Boundaries must be maintained. Rules must be followed. Otherwise the result is disqualification. Walking in grace does not mean an absence of rules. Freedom in Christ is not a call to live as we please. It is a call to live as HE pleases.

The Example of a Farmer

2 Timothy 2:6-7

The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

I'm not so sure that the force of Paul's statement comes through in the way the New American Standard Version Bible has translated verse 6. A better translation would say that *the farmer must first work hard to receive his share of the crops*. The point of the passage is that first you work, then you reap the results of that work.

Every farmer knows this. I have a black thumb and can kill any plant known to man and even I know this. First you plant, then you harvest. You can't do the one until you have done the other. There is no possibility of getting the order wrong. Notice that in all three of these illustrations there is a reward for the believer who has been strong in grace:

Illustration	The Call	The Reward
A Soldier	Suffer hardship	Please the One who enlisted you
An Athlete	Follow the rules	Win the prize
A Farmer	Work hard	Receive your share of the harvest

The Motivation for Endurance

2 Timothy 2:8-9

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

Paul's final example is of himself. He says to Timothy, "You remember to remember Jesus the way I have remembered Jesus. You do it, no matter what the cost; even if it takes you to a Roman dungeon."

Why? What was the motivation for suffering the evils of a Roman prison? What gave Paul the gasoline to endure such circumstances? It was the fact that he knew that *the word of God is not imprisoned*. They could put Paul in prison, but they could not imprison the gospel.

That is the closing message of the book of Acts. A great deal of the book of Acts takes place within various prisons and courtrooms. It is a book about the attempt to imprison the gospel. It comes to a close with Paul having been brought to Rome under house arrest.

Acts 28:30-31

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Do you see the very last word in the very last verse? It is also the last word in the Greek text. It is the word *unhindered*. The point is that they could lock up Paul but they could not lock up the gospel. He was chained; the gospel was free.

This is a liberating truth. The gospel is winning. It cannot be contained. It cannot be imprisoned. It will succeed in accomplishing that for which it was designed. That is motivating. It is motivating because you are guaranteed success in sharing the gospel.

Responding to the Call

2 Timothy 4:6-7

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

A Sunday school teacher, a Mr. Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Fredrick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer became a famous speaker to youth and preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman went into work for the YMCA (in that day a very religious and Christian ministry). He employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. He went on of course to be a famous revival preacher. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball, who invested his life in the lives of others.

Audie Murphy was an unlikely hero. Weighing in at only 112 pounds and with the face of a child, Audie was 18 years old when he went overseas during World War II. Nothing about him suggested a hero in the making. Yet when called upon by his commanding officers to do the duty of a soldier, Murphy held nothing back. By war's end, the quiet boy from Texas had fought with extraordinary bravery and saved the lives of countless fellow soldiers. He returned home to an adoring public, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and received at least 36 other medals—more than anyone else in U.S. history, all because as he put it, "Nothing meant more to him as a soldier than the will of his commanding officer." You can still find his headstone at Arlington National Cemetery.